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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Americo Grossman
Patricia Derian, D/HA
Fernando Rondon, ARA/ECA

March 24, 1977

PLACE: Ms. Derian's office

DISTRIBUTION: Amb. R. C. Hill

Grossman is an Argentine industrialist and a long time supporter of Peronist causes. He presently backs the Videla government as the only viable political alternative for troubled Argentina.

Grossman is in the U.S. as a self-appointed ambassador promoting mutual understanding. He claims his trip has the blessing of the Junta and that a flowery letter from Peronist leader Bittel enables him to speak on behalf of his party. His trip is financed, however, by US-Argentine business interests.

Grossman described the human rights situation as very bad. He expressed the hope, nevertheless, that President Videla would soon get the situation under control. He had high praise for recent US actions on behalf of human rights in Argentina. He warned, however, that had his party been in power when military credits were reduced, a mass rally denouncing the US would have taken place. The military government, he explained, is too unpopular to be able to attract crowds. Grossman had even greater praise for our vote in the World Bank, which was accompanied by a human rights statement. He thinks we should keep voting yes with a human rights disclaimer. It is important to keep up the pressure on the military regime, he stated, but US actions should be modulated to prevent playing into the hands of military nationalists.

COMMENT: Grossman wants to see the military government share power with civilians. He does not call for elections but simply a sharing of Cabinet posts, governorships, etc. He seems to think that US human rights pressure will contribute to the civilian opening. If an opening fails to take place, he fears that reasonable Peronists who want to collaborate with the military will be overtaken in their party by those who want to oppose the military openly. Unfortunately, Grossman does not speak English, talks too much about his personal influence, and is inarticulate. One FSO friend of his feels he is a dangerous meddler. He could soon wear out his welcome if he stays in Washington for two months. He is already irritating the Argentine Embassy as he purports to give them his own perceptions of the US. Nonetheless, the Argentine Junta seems willing to play along with this Peronist Ambassador.

ARA/ECA:FRondon:jr

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